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1608/5278.

*Ministers ought to please GOD,
rather than Men.*

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SERMON

Preached at the

Opening of the Synod of Lo-
THIAN and TWEDDALE,
May 3d, 1737.

*By Mr. WILLIAM ROBERTSON, one of the
Ministers of Edinburgh.*

Published at the Desire of many who heard it.



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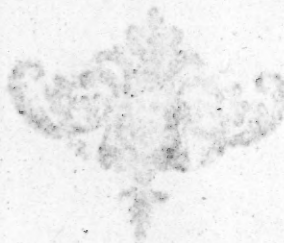
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PREFACE.

IT may be fit to acquaint the Reader,
That having wrote a good deal more,
upon this large and copious Subject, than
what could possibly be delivered within the
Compass of an Hour; after I had yielded to
the Importunity of several worthy Brethren,
and others of my good Friends, who urged
me to publish the Sermon; I thought it
would be proper to supply it again, from
my Papers, with those Passages I had been
obliged to leave out in the Delivery, especi-
ally upon the second and third general
Heads. This, I confess, has made it swell
to a greater Bulk than I could have wish'd;
however,

however, I hope the candid and well-disposed Reader will have the Goodness to forgive other Faults, he may perhaps observe in the Discourse, besides the length of it. I shall make no other Apology for the Publication of it, but that it is sincerely and honestly intended, for the spiritual Benefit of such as may take the Trouble of perusing it. And if, through the Blessing of God, it shall prove useful this Way, I have my End.



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1 THES. ii. 4. *But as we were allowed of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing Men, but God, which trieth our Hearts.*



TH E holy Scriptures afford us abundant Evidence, and such as may be sufficient to satisfy any sober and impartial Enquirer, as to the divine Institution of a Gospel-Ministry. This is one of the valuable Gifts which Christ has bestowed on his Church, in consequence of his Ascension and Exaltation; *he has given them not only Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists, but Pastors and Teachers,* to labour stately among them, for their spiritual Instruction and Edification;
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and, in doing this, he has remarkably demonstrated his great Love to his People, and his earnest Concern for their Welfare and Happiness. And indeed if those who are vested with this sacred Office, would take Care to behave themselves suitably to their Character, and to discharge the Duties of their Calling with Faithfulness and Diligence; if they who *are allowed of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel*, would *speak* and act in such a Manner, *as to please God*, and approve themselves unto him, this would soon convince Men of the Excellency and Usefulness of the ministerial Office, and of the great Benefit that must accrue from it to the Church of Christ; this would be the best Answer that could be given to the Cavils of Infidels and Libertines against it.

And therefore, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, since you have thought fit to impose this Task upon me, (however unworthy and unfit I am for it) since you have called me to perform this important Service upon this Occasion; I have chosen to discourse to you from the Words just now read, that I may shew you (at least in some Measure) how you ought to behave yourselves, and to discharge the most considerable Parts of your sacred Function, so as you may approve yourselves unto your great Lord and Master, and find Acceptance in his Sight; and I hope you will allow me to lay your Duty before you, with that Plainness and Freedom, that becomes one who stands in this Place, and who is sensible of the Obligation he lies under, even from the Text he is discoursing on, *so to speak not as pleasing Men, but God.*

The Apostle Paul, in the whole of this Context, is endeavouring to convince the *Thessalonians* of the Upright-



Uprightness of his Heart, and the Sincerity of his Intentions, in the Discharge of his ministerial Work amongst them; and for this Purpose he tells them in my Text: *As we were allowed of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing Men but God, which trieth our Hearts.* What he says here, particularly of his *speaking* or preaching, is certainly to be extended to all the other Parts of his ministerial Work, at least, the one may be justly inferred from the other. Now, he tells us, that his great Design in all this, was not to gratify the foolish and sinful Humours of Men, but to please God, and to approve himself unto him; and this was to be looked upon as a very convincing Evidence of his Sincerity; and, for the Truth of it, he afterwards appeals both to God himself, and to their own Consciences.

Now, when the Apostle gives us this Account of his own Temper and Behaviour, in the Exercise of his Ministry, he, no doubt, intends it as a Pattern for the Imitation of all other Ministers of the Gospel, in all Ages of the Church; and by shewing us how he acted himself, he in effect points out our Duty to us, *viz.* that in the whole of our ministerial Work, we should *so speak* and act, *not as pleasing Men but God*; which we are not to understand, as if in no Case it were lawful or allowable for us to please Men, and to do what may be agreeable to them; but the Meaning is, that it should be our main Intention, our chief Care and Endeavour, in all our sacred Ministrations, to please our great Lord and Master, and to shew ourselves approved of him; as the Apostle else where exhorts *Timothy, 2 Ep. ii. 15. Study to*
A 2 *shew*

shew thy self approved unto God, a Work-man that needeth not to be ashamed.

And he here lays before us two Reasons, or Arguments, which strongly engaged him to such a Temper and Practice as this, and ought certainly to have the same Influence upon us. 1. The Consideration of the great Privilege conferred upon us, as Ministers of the Gospel, the high Honour and Dignity we are advanced to, and the important Trust committed unto us. *We are allowed of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel*, i. e. We are approved, or judged fit, to be employed in the Office of the Ministry, and to be intrusted with dispensing the Gospel, and all the Ordinances thereof. And 2. The Consideration of our having to do with an omniscient God, who is the Searcher of our Hearts, the Witness of all our Actions, and will call us at last to a strict and awful Account of them; *so we speak not as pleasing Men, but God, who trieth our Hearts.*

Having thus briefly explained the Words, we may sum up the Meaning and Purport of them in the following Observation, *namely*, That the Consideration of God's having called us to the Office of the Ministry, and intrusted us with the Dispensation of the Gospel of Christ, and that God himself narrowly observes us, and knows the several Springs and Designs of all our Actions, and will, at last, call us to a strict and impartial Account of them; the Consideration, I say, of these Things, ought to engage us so to preach the Gospel, and to discharge every other Part of our ministerial Work, as we may make it our main Scope and Business to please God, rather than Men.

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In handling this Subject, thro' Divine Assistance, I shall,

First, Offer some Remarks for stating aright, and explaining the Duty here recommended to us ; and shewing you how far we may warrantably *please Men*, and in what Cases we ought not to do so.

Secondly, I shall shew you, in some Instances, how we ought to preach the Gospel, and to discharge other Parts of our ministerial Work, so as to make it our chief Aim and Endeavour *to please God, and approve ourselves unto him.*

Thirdly, I shall open the Force of the Arguments here proposed, and shew you what Influence they ought to have upon us, to engage us to the Practice of this Duty. And since the Whole of the Discourse will be practical, I shall not need to make any particular or distinct Application of it.

First then, I am to offer some Remarks for stating aright, and explaining the Duty here recommended to us ; and shewing you, how far we may warrantably *please Men*, and in what Cases we ought not to do so. And we may observe,

1. That when the Apostle cautions Ministers against *pleasing Men*, we must not imagine, that this gives them any Allowance to disoblige, irritate and provoke their Fellow-Christians, as often as they have a-mind, without any Necessity, and for no Purpose, but merely to gratify their own Humour, Passion or Resentment. When we are called to guard against a sinful and unwarrantable pleasing of Men, let us beware of involving ourselves into the Vice that is directly opposite to it, by offending and displeasing our Fellow-creatures, without any Reason or Necessity, and for no other Purpose, but to
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give a Vent to our own peevish and passionate Humour; for it would be a Sign of great Imprudence and Folly †, while we are endeavouring to avoid one Extreme, to run headlong into the other. Let us then, my Brethren, carefully guard against an Excess of Complaisance, a mean and servile Obsequiousness, on the one Hand, and a surly, morose, disobliging Behaviour on the other; and let us endeavour, if possible, to hit the right Midst betwixt these two Extremes.

Ministers are indeed Men of like Frailties, Infirmities and Passions as others; but certainly, if it be the Duty of other Men to govern the Temper of their Minds, to restrain their exorbitant Humours, to curb their unruly Passions, to avoid all Manner of Strife and Contention, and to endeavour *as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all Men*; much more are Ministers obliged to all this, who are called by their Office to *preach the Gospel of Peace*, that Gospel which not only publishes the *glad Tidings of Reconciliation and Peace with God*; but calls upon Men, with the greatest Earnestness, to live in Peace, and Friendship, and Concord with one another, to *put on, as the Elect of God, Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness and Long-suffering*. To this Purpose the Apostle tells us, that a Bishop or Minister *must not be self-willed, soon angry, no Brawler or Striker, but patient, or forbearing*, 1 Tim. iii. 3. compared with Tit. i. 7. And again, he says, 2 Tim. ii. 24. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.*

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† Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt. Hor.

2. We may observe, That, as it is natural for all Men to desire the Esteem and Good-liking of their Neighbours and Acquaintance, and they may warrantably do so, provided they keep within just Bounds; for this is necessary, in order to their living creditably, comfortably, and usefully in the World: So, no doubt, Ministers may lawfully desire a just Share of the Esteem and Good-will of other Men, and especially of those who are more immediately committed to their Care and Oversight, because this is, in a great Measure, necessary to the Credit of their Ministry, the Interest of Religion, and the Acceptableness and Success of their Labours. You know it is a Rule commonly prescribed by the Masters of Rhetorick, that those who are called to speak in publick, should endeavour to gain the Favour and Good-will of their Audience; for this will not only incline them to hear them with suitable Attention and Regard, but may likewise dispose them to comply chearfully with the Instructions and Advices they offer them: Whereas, on the contrary, if People have conceived a Prejudice against a Minister, and entertain a Dislike or Contempt of him, it is not to be imagined, humanly speaking, that they will much regard what he says, or can reap any great Benefit by his Labours.

3. Ministers may warrantably *please Men*, if it is not inconsistent with their spiritual Advantage, and much more, if it has a direct Tendency that Way. This is a general Rule, which the Apostle lays down, and which belongs to Ministers as well as others, *Rom. xv. 1, 2. We then that are strong ought to bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not to please ourselves; but let every one of us please his Neighbour*

hour for his Good to Edification. When we have a Prospect of doing Good to our Neighbours, of gaining them to the Love of the Truth, and recommending to them the good Ways of God, by complying with their Inclinations as to some Things that are indifferent, and allowable in their Nature; we ought certainly to do it. Thus we find, that while the Use of Circumcision, and the *Mosaical* Ceremonies, was not as yet intirely abrogated, the Apostle *Paul* circumcised *Timothy*, that he might not give Offence to the *Jews*, and in Hopes of rendring his Ministry so much the more acceptable to them, *Acts* xvi. 3. Yea, he tells us how far he condescended to Men of all Sorts and Characters, and how ready he was to comply with them in Things that were lawful and innocent, for the Sake of their spiritual Benefit, *1 Cor.* ix. 19. *Though I be free from all Men, yet have I made myself a Servant unto all, that I might gain the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: To them that are under the Law, as under the Law: To them that are without Law, as without Law: To the weak became I as weak: I am made all Things to all Men, that I might, by all Means, save some.* And Chap. x. 32. *Give none Offence neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I please all Men in all Things, not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved.*

4. Ministers may and ought to please Men, so far as they can do it in a Consistency with the Duty they owe to God, and the Desire they ought to have above all Things of pleasing him. This we may infer from that excellent Rule and Advice of the Apostle's, *Rom.* xii. 18. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peace-*

peaceably with all Men. 'Tis plain, we cannot live peaceably and amicably with others, unless we take Care to suit ourselves to their Temper and Inclinations, and to do such Things as are agreeable and well-pleasing to them: Now, this the Apostle requires of us, *if it be possible*, which certainly is to be understood with this Restriction, if we can do it lawfully, and with a safe Conscience; for it is a good Maxim, that † *we can only do that which we can do lawfully.* And thus I have shown you, in some Instances, how far Ministers may warrantably please Men.

But, on the other Hand, we may observe,

1. That Ministers must not please Men so as to conceal any Truth, which is necessary for them, or may be for their Advantage to know; or to withhold from them any of the important Doctrines of Christianity, which they are called to deliver to them. I confess indeed, that sometimes it may be very improper and unseasonable, to publish some Truths of Religion, when People are not sufficiently prepared and disposed for receiving them, and when the publishing, and insisting upon them, would, in all Likelyhood, do more Harm than Good: And hence our Saviour tells his Disciples, *John xvi. 12. I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* And we find he sometimes discharges them to tell any Man that he was the Christ. It must likewise be owned, that some Truths are of such small Importance, and so remote from the Foundation, that they may and ought to be concealed, when the Peace, and Safety, and Edification of the Church requires it: For since the Knowledge

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† *Id tantum possumus, quod jure possumus.*

and Faith of such Truths is not necessary to Salvation, if we have good Reason to think, that the venting or propaling of them would disturb the Peace of the Church, and mar the Edification of our Fellow-christians; we had certainly better conceal them, at least for a Time: For we may apply to this Purpose what the Apostle says, *Rom. xiv. 22. Hast thou Faith? Have it to thyself before God.*

But we must not, for the Sake of pleasing Men, or for Fear of their Displeasure, conceal or dissemble any of the necessary, important, and essential Doctrines of Christianity. The Apostles were strictly prohibited to preach a crucified Christ; they knew that this Doctrine was very offensive both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and carnal Prudence might have suggested to them, that it would not only be for their Safety, but for the Honour of their Cause, to conceal the ignominious Death of their Lord; yet so far were they from doing so, that they published it upon all Occasions, with the greatest Freedom and Boldness; *We cannot (say they) but speak the Things which we have seen and heard: Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts iv. 20. and ii. 36.* And the Apostle Paul appeals to the Elders of *Ephesus*, Chap. xx. 20. *That he had kept back nothing that might be profitable unto them; wherefore (says he ver. 26.) I take you to record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Council of God.*

2. Ministers must not please Men, so as to disguise or corrupt the Doctrine of the Gospel for their Sake. The *Judaizing Teachers*, of whom the Apostle

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poſtle often complains, maintained the Neceſſity of Circumciſion, and of obſerving the whole ceremonial Law; and ſo they *perverted the Goſpel of Chriſt*, and corrupted the Purity and Simplicity of it, by blending the Law with it; and this they did in order to gain the Favour of the *Jews*, and to avoid their Hatred and Diſpleaſure; as we are told *Gal. vi. 12. As many as deſire to make a fair Shew in the Fleſh, they conſtrain you to be circumciſed, only leſt they ſhould ſuffer Perſecution for the Croſs of Chriſt.* But the Apoſtle ſtrongly cautions the *Galatians* againſt this, throughout the whole Epiſtle, and particularly *Chap. v. 8.* he tells them, *This Perſuaſion cometh not of him who calleth you.* And he adds, *ver. 9. A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.* Tho' a falſe Opinion may appear to be but ſmall and inconfiderable, yet we ought carefully to guard againſt it; for there is oftentimes a Connection between Errors as well as Truths; one Error naturally draws after it another, and that a third; and ſo by this Means the whole Doctrine of the Goſpel is in Hazard of being leavened and corrupted. But, my Brethren, we muſt take Care to preſerve the Doctrine of Chriſtianity pure and intire, without any Addition or Alteration. We muſt not mix in with it either our own fooliſh Notions and Fancies, or the Inventions of other Men, out of a vain Imagination, that we can make it better, and more perfect than it is; or from a fond Deſire of making it more agreeable to the Taſte of the Age in which we live: However univerſally a falſe Opinion may prevail, however polite and fashionable it may appear, and how much ſoever it may ſuit the corrupt Humours and Inclinations of thoſe, whom per-

haps we are ambitious to please, yet we must not presume to vent and maintain it ourselves, nor patronize it in others. We must not take the Freedom to *deliver* any Thing to our Hearers but *what we have received from the Lord*; and if we should do so, they are not bound to pay any Regard to it.

Our Saviour tells us, *Joh. xviii. 37.* That *to this End was he born, and for this Cause he came into the World, that he might bear Witness to the Truth*: And indeed he is the true and faithful Witness, and every one that is of the Truth beareth his Voice. But let us remember, my Brethren, that as Ministers of the Gospel, we likewise are called to *bear Witness to the Truth*; for this End were we sent into the World, and for this End were we vested with the sacred Office; and you know, that as Witnesses, we are obliged to *declare the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth*; and therefore, we must not wilfully leave out of our Testimony any Part of Divine Truth, nor put in any Thing besides it. The Apostles and primitive Teachers of Christianity were strictly faithful this Way, and so must we. For (says the Apostle, 2 Cor. ii. 17.) *We are not as many who corrupt the Word of God; but as of Sincerity, but as of God, in the Sight of God, speak we in Christ.* And Chap. iv. 2. *We have renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by Manifestation of the Truth, commending ourselves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God.*

3. Ministers must not, for the Sake of pleasing Men, or for Fear of displeasing them, openly deny or impugn any of the Truths of the Gospel, or abandon

bandon the Faith and Profession of them. The Apostle tells us, *2 Cor. xiii. 8. That we can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth.* We are called to be Preachers of Truth and Righteousness; and if we act agreeably to our Character, we must regard the Interests of Truth as sacred and inviolable, and must not presume to do any Thing in Opposition thereto, either to court the Favour of the Great, or to gain the Applause of the Multitude. It is an excellent Advice which the Wise-man gives us, *Prov. xxiii. 23. Buy the Truth, and sell it not.* We must buy it at any Rate, and sell it at none: We must not oppose or contradict the Truth, we must not betray or undermine it, we must not relinquish or abandon it, upon any Consideration whatsoever; but we must adhere stedfastly to it, and *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, whatever it may cost us, whatever Losses we may sustain, whatever Hazards we may run, whatever Hardships and Distresses we may undergo for the Sake of it; tho' we should, on that Account, forfeit the Favour of the Men of this World, and incur their Displeasure to the highest Degree. To this Purpose the Apostle exhorts *Timothy, 2 Ep. i. 8, 13. Be not thou ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord, nor of me his Prisoner: But hold fast the Form of sound Words, which thou hast heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in Christ Jesus.*

4. We must not please Men to their Hurt. As we must not please or gratify them to the Prejudice of Truth, so neither must we do it to their own Prejudice and Disadvantage. There is a great Difference, my Brethren, betwixt pleasing People and edifying them, and 'tis very possible that either
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of these may take Place without the other ; we may please Men when we do not edify them, and edify them when we do not please them. Now, altho' we ought to *please them for their Good to Edification*, as I observed to you before ; yet we must by no Means do so, when it is to their real Prejudice and Disadvantage, when it tends to hurt them in their most valuable Interests. We must not sooth them in their Follies and Extravagancies ; we must not flatter them in their Errors and Vices ; we must not *heal their Wounds slightly, and cry Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace* : For in doing so, we betray both our own Trust and their Souls ; and for the Sake of gratifying their Humors, we hazard their eternal Salvation.

The Apostle tells us, 2 *Tim.* iv. 3. That *the Time will come when Men will not endure sound Doctrine ; but after their own Lusts shall heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears. And they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto Fables.* But tho' they cannot endure sound Doctrine, tho' it be grating and disagreeable to them ; tho' they may be apt to say to their Teachers, as those we read of, *Isa.* xxx. 10. *Prophecy not unto us right Things, but speak unto us smooth Things, prophecy, Deceits ;* yet surely the Ministers of the Gospel must not gratify them in this, if they have any Concern for their spiritual Interest, and the Salvation of their Souls. A prudent Physician will not please the Fancy or Taste of his Patients, at the Expence of their Health ; he will not give Drink to one who is ill of a Dropsy, because at the same Time that it gratifies his Appetite, it likewise feeds and increases his Distemper ; so, my Brethren, if we would
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act the Part of faithful Physicians of the Soul, we must not please the Humors and Inclinations of our People, so as to endanger their spiritual Health and Welfare.

5. We must not please Men merely for the Sake of our own temporal Interest. This is commonly the great Motive that tempts us to an unwarrantable Obsequiousness and Complaisance, not only in our ordinary Behaviour, but even in the Exercise of our sacred Function: For when Ministers are animated by a Principle of vain Ambition, or sordid Avarice; when they have an immoderate Thirst after worldly Honour, Preferment, Fame or Applause; or an excessive Desire of worldly Wealth and Riches; such Principles as these must necessarily ensnare them into a base and servile Compliance, with the Humors of those with whom they are connected, and upon whom they depend. Men of this Temper will be ready, upon all Occasions, to cringe and bow to their Superiors, in the most abject and submissive Manner, and even to caress and flatter their Inferiors, when they think it makes for their Purpose, and serves to advance their ambitious and covetous Designs; for what is the Reason that they are at so much Pains to please others, but that by this Means they may please themselves, and promote their own worldly Interest?

The holy Apostle tells us how far he was from such a Temper and Practice as this, in the Words immediately following my Text; *For neither (says he) at any Time used we flattering Words, as ye know, nor a Cloak of Covetousness; God is Witness: Nor of Men sought we Glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.* And he warns us earnestly against Persons

sons of this Character, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Now, I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly; and by good Words and fair Speeches, deceive the Hearts of the Simple.

6. We must not please Men so far as to decline any Part of our Work upon their Account, or wilfully omit the Performance of any Duty which God has called us to. We may indeed, and in some Cases, ought to abridge our Christian Liberty, and to abstain from those Things that are indifferent in their own Nature, and may be either lawfully used or forborn; when we know that our doing such Things, will be grievous to some of our weak Brethren, and prove Matter of Offence to them, as the Apostle shews us at large, Rom. xiv. and in other Places. But in Matters of plain commanded Duty, we must not yield an Ace, we must not forbear the doing of our Duty, upon any Consideration whatsoever; when God has interposed his Authority, we must obey, whatever the Consequences may be, even tho' we should displease the whole World. You see what a noble Answer the Apostles Peter and John gave to the Jewish Sanhedrim, when they discharged them to speak at all, or to teach in the Name of Jesus, Acts iv. 19, 20. Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the Things which we have seen and heard. God has commanded us to preach the Word, to be instant in Season and out of Season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine:

trine: And we must not wilfully neglect any Part of this Work, in order to curry Favour with any Men whatsoever, great or small, or to avoid their Displeasure.

7. We must not for the Sake of pleasing Men, or for Fear of displeasing them, venture upon the Commission of any Thing that is sinful and displeasing in the Sight of God. This comprehends a great deal of what has been already said; we must not conceal or disguise the Truth; we must not corrupt or adulterate it; we must not deny or oppose it; we must not forsake or abandon it; we must not vent or maintain any false Opinions; we must not connive at, or flatter Men in their Follies, Errors, or Sins; we must not commend and applaud them for any Thing, for which they deserve to be blam'd and condemned; we must not fawn upon, and tamely submit to great Men; we must not gratify the Humours and Conceits of the Populace: In short, we must not, for the Sake of pleasing Men, do any Thing that may be offensive and displeasing to God.

The pleasing of our Neighbours, and gaining their Good-will and Esteem, is doubtless, in itself, a good Thing; but let us remember the Apostle's excellent Rule, *Rom. iii. 8. We must not do Evil, that Good may come.* And, can there be any Thing more absurd and unreasonable, as well as impious, than for the Sake of pleasing Men, to venture upon the Displeasure of God? The Prophet's *eating and drinking at Bethel*, was but a very inconsiderable Circumstance in its own Nature; besides, that he was decoyed into it, by the Persuasion of the false Prophet; and yet because he *disobeyed the Voice of the Lord*, and did not punctually observe his

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Orders, you see how severely he repented it, 1 Kings xiii. 21, 22, 24. *A Lion met the Prophet by the Way and slew him, and his Carcase was not buried in the Sepulchre of his Fathers.*

I have insisted the more largely upon this Head, because, by reason of our natural Corruption and Depravation, our inordinate Self-love, our Pride and Vanity, our Fearfulness and Cowardice, and many other Weaknesses and Infirmities that attend us, we have all of us, I'm afraid, too strong a Bias towards an unwarrantable pleasing of Men; and there is hardly any Thing which we need to be more earnestly cautioned against.

I now go on to the

Second Thing proposed, viz. To shew you in some Instances, how we ought to preach the Gospel, and to discharge other Parts of our ministerial Work, so as to make it our chief Aim and Endeavour to please God, and approve ourselves unto him. And what I am to say upon this Head, I shall deliver in a Way of Advice or Exhortation.

1. Let us endeavour to be well furnished with these excellent Gifts and Qualifications, that are necessary to an acceptable and successful Discharge of our ministerial Work, and to improve in them more and more. If we would *shew ourselves approved unto God*, we must be such *Workmen as need not be ashamed*; and sure I am, my Brethren, if we are rude and *unskilful in the Word of Righteousness*, if we are to a great Degree unqualified for the sacred Work, in which we are engaged, we have good Reason to blush and be ashamed, both in the Sight of God and Man; and, in this Case, we can neither expect the Approbation of our great Lord and Master,

Master, nor can we hope that our ministerial Labours will serve to any valuable Purpose.

Let us see to it then, my Brethren, in the *first* Place, That our Hearts be purified and adorned with the Grace of God. Ministers are called *the Salt of the Earth*, Matth. v. 13. but before they can be fit for the Seasoning of others, their own Hearts must be thoroughly seasoned with the Grace of God, and a strong Sense and Relish of Piety; for without this they are unsavoury to God, and will at length become unsavoury to Men also; for Nature will out some Time or other, unless it be changed by Grace, as well as curbed by the Rules of Prudence. A celebrated Author, who writes of the Eloquence of the Pulpit, spends a whole Chapter of his Book, in proving, that one cannot be a good Preacher, without being a good Man. I will not carry the Matter so far, as to say, that all the ministerial Acts of an ill Man are invalid, that he can have no Success at all in his Work, and cannot be instrumental in the Conversion or Edification of so much as one Soul; for it would be hard to suppose, that our Saviour employed a *Judas* in the sacred Office, to no Manner of Purpose at all: But at the same Time, it cannot be imagined, that the Labours of such Persons will be attended with any great Success, or that they will be honoured to do much Good to *Others*, who are void of true Goodness *themselves*.

Let us think seriously with ourselves, my Brethren; How can we recommend Religion to the Love and Practice of others, if we have never felt the Power of it upon our own Hearts? How can we persuade others to be good, if we have never been persuaded to be so ourselves? How can we prevail with

them to devote themselves to the Service of God, and to fall in Love with the Ways of Holiness, if we ourselves in the mean Time are Slaves to the Devil, the World, and our own Lusts, and willing to remain so? How can we speak to the Experience of others, if we have no Experience of the Life and Power of Godliness ourselves? How can we warm and affect our Hearers by what we say, and make serious Impressions upon their Minds, while our own Hearts are cold and insensible, and not in the least Degree touched with what we deliver to them? And when we are discoursing to them of the great and awful Truths of the Gospel, and endeavouring to awaken, convince, and convert them, will not our own Conscience in the mean time be apt to fly in our Face, and to reproach us in such Language as this? "*Physician, heal thy self; pull out the Beam first out of thine own Eye, and then thou wilt see the clearer to cast the Motes out of the Eyes of others.*" Endeavour to be such a Person thy self, as thou wouldst have others to be. Be persuaded thy self of the Truth and Importance of Religion, and thou wilt be the better able to persuade others." Thus you see, my Brethren, how necessary it is, that we be renewed and sanctified by the Grace of God, if we would discharge our ministerial Work with Success, and *shew ourselves approved unto God.*

I might also exhort you, upon this Head, to labour to attain a clear and distinct, a large and comprehensive Knowledge of the Doctrine of the Gospel. And to get your Souls animated with a holy Zeal for the Glory of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom in this World.

World. And likewise, to get your Hearts filled with a tender Love and Compassion towards the Souls of Men, and an earnest Concern for their true Welfare and Happiness: But these Things I will not insist upon.

2. Let us keep the great Ends of our Ministry constantly in our View, and what these are we need not be at a Loss to know; for the *Scriptures* have plainly enough declared, that the great Design of a Gospel-ministry is, *to open the Eyes of Sinners, and to turn them from Darkness unto Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*, Acts xxvi. 18. and that it is intended *for the perfecting of the Saints, and the edifying of the Body of Christ, that we may all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, to the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 12, 13. From which two Passages of Scripture, compared together, we may learn, that the great Design of all our Ministrations is, the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, and the Edification and Perfection of Saints, the building them up in Knowledge, Faith, Love, Holiness, and Comfort, to the eternal Salvation of their Souls.

Well then, my Brethren, let us keep these great Ends steadily in our View; let us sincerely intend them, and earnestly desire to attain them, and this will be of excellent Use to direct and regulate us in the Whole of our ministerial Work; this would animate us, both in our secret Retirements, and in our publick Appearances; this would have a proper Influence upon us in our Reading, Meditation, Prayer, Preaching, Catechising, and all the other Parts of our Work, and engage us to manage them
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in such a Manner, as to make it our great Study to please God, and approve ourselves unto him.

4. Let us take Care to preach the pure Doctrine of the Gospel to our People, without any Mixture or Alloy, without any Addition or Alteration. The Apostle, describing the Qualifications of a Bishop or Presbyter, tells us, *Tit. i. 9.* that he must hold fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince Gain-sayers. And he exhorts Titus himself (and in him all Ministers of the Gospel) to take Care, that in their Doctrine they shew Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned, *Chap. ii. 7.* We live in an Age of the World, wherein Orthodoxy of Opinion, or a right Belief of the Doctrines of Christianity, is very much exposed and ridiculed; with how much Justice, let any sober, thinking, impartial Person judge. Men claim to themselves an unbounded Liberty of thinking what they please, and of venting and publishing what they think; but whatever Pretensions they may have to support this Claim, which I am not now to examine, surely, my Brethren, we who are the Ministers of the Gospel, are by our Office bound to preach the Doctrines of the Gospel, as our Saviour himself has delivered them in his Word, and our People are obliged to receive them as the true and faithful Sayings of God. The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, *1 Ep. xv. 13.* I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he rose again from the Dead according to the Scriptures. And *Chap. ii. 2.* I determined not to know any Thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him

him crucified. And Chap. i: 23. We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness; but unto them which are called, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God. And altho' this Sort of Preaching may be accounted Foolishness, by some who pretend to be Men of a bright Genius, a polite Taste, a refined Turn of Thought, and I don't know what; yet it hath pleased God, in all Ages of the World, by this same Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe, as the Apostle tells us, Ver. 21.

Well then, my Brethren, *Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth.* It is the Method which God of his infinite Wildom has contrived and appointed, and which he makes effectual, for the Conversion and Salvation of lost Sinners. And let us not (by discoursing for the most Part upon Subjects of a moral Kind, and fetching almost all our Topicks and Arguments, from the Principles of Reason and natural Religion) give People any Cause to suspect that we are really *ashamed of the Gospel*, and that we prefer the Religion of Nature before it. But let us insist very frequently, in our Sermons, upon the peculiar and distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity: Let us explain to our People, as clearly and fully as we can, their sinful and miserable Condition by Nature, and the admirable Remedy which God of his infinite Wildom and Mercy has contrived for us; the Mediation and Satisfaction of our blessed Saviour, his Incarnation and Birth, his holy Life and Example, his Death and Sufferings, his Resurrection from the Dead, his Ascension into Heaven, his Intercession at the Right-hand

hand of God, and his coming to judge the World at the last Day, the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration, of Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, of Justification by his Merits and Righteousness, and the Necessity of the Influences and Operations of the holy Spirit, to renew and sanctify our Natures, and to furnish us for every good Word and Work.

But, by what I have said upon this Head, I would by no Means be understood to dissuade you or myself from discoursing likewise, frequently upon the practical Parts of Christianity, and enforcing upon our Hearers the Observance of all the Precepts of the Moral Law: For *what God has joined together, must not be separated or put asunder.* True Christian Morality is the same Thing with Gospel-holiness; and to engage Men to this, is the great Design of all preaching, and of the whole of the Gospel-Dispensation; for, as the Apostle tells us, *The Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto us in the Gospel, teaching us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* But when we are inculcating upon our Hearts the Practice of moral Duties, let us be careful to take the Christian Scheme along with us, and to make use, not only of such Arguments as arise from the Nature and Reason of Things, but likewise of those Motives which the Gospel itself proposes to us; and particularly, such as the Consideration of the Death and Sufferings of our Saviour, and the Redemption he has thereby purchased, suggests unto us; than which none more cogent or powerful can possibly be devised. And let us always direct our People,

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whatsoever they do, whether in Word or Deed, to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and to depend upon him by a lively Faith, in the whole Course of their Christian Obedience, for his Wisdom to conduct them, his Grace to assist them, and his Righteousness to procure them Acceptance.

4. Let us deliver the Truths of God to our Hearers, in decent, plain and intelligible Language. It is an excellent Rule which is prescrib'd to us by a great Master of Eloquence, and it is fully as applicable to the Eloquence of the Pulpit, as to any other Kind of it, *viz. * That an Orator should not only speak so as he may be understood, but so as it must be impossible he should not be understood.* And we may likewise apply to this Purpose, what the Apostle Paul says, *1 Cor. xiv. 19. I had rather speak five Words with my Understanding, that I may teach others, than Ten thousand Words in an unknown Tongue.* And 'tis plain, my Brethren, a Man had as good talk to his Hearers in Greek or Arabick, as in a Stile of English, which they cannot understand.

There are some who make it their sole Ambition to please the learned and polite Part of Mankind, and to be applauded by them; and for this Purpose, they either affect to handle their Subject in a very philosophical Way, and entertain their Hearers with a long Chain of nice abstracted Reasoning, which very few of them are able to comprehend; or else they are at great Pains to adorn and embellish their Discourses with florid Discriptions, bright

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** Oratori non tam curandum est, ut auditor ipsum intelligere possit, quam ne omnino possit non intelligere.*

Quintil. l. 8. c. 2.

Turns of Wit, lively Images and Similitudes, beautiful Figures and Colourings, and all the Ornaments of Rhetorick. I shall not disapprove or condemn these Things, provided they be used discreetly and with a right Intention; but that which I insist upon is, that a Minister should endeavour to express himself in plain and easy Language, so as the People may understand him, otherwise he cannot possibly instruct or edify them. Can there be any Thing more absurd and ridiculous, than for a Man to preach only to three or four, or even a Dozen or a Score of his Hearers, and in the mean Time to neglect all the rest intirely, as if he had nothing to do with them? to make it his Business to please and charm a few, or even (if you will) to edify them, and leave the Bulk of his Audience to starve for want of proper Food? I'm afraid it may be said of such Persons, that they *preach themselves*, and not *Christ Jesus the Lord*; they seek their own Glory rather than his, and *love the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God*. And altho' they may perhaps make very *fine Discourses*, yet they cannot with any Justice be reckoned *good Sermons*; for a good Sermon is designed and calculated for the Edification of Persons of all Ranks and Characters, the Poor as well as the Rich, the Weak as well as the Strong, the rude and illiterate as well as the Learned.

But there are others again, who are extremely fond of popular Applause, make their Court to the inferior Sort of People, and study as much as possible to please them, and procure their Esteem and Admiration: And therefore, that they may suit themselves the better to their coarse Taste, they take
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Care to stuff their Discourses with flat and vulgar Expressions, low Similies, strained Metaphors, familiar Phrases and Proverbs, and other such like Things, which are far below the Dignity of the Pulpit, the Gravity of a Preacher of the Gospel, and the Majesty of the Divine Oracles.

Now let us endeavour, my Brethren, to avoid both these Extremes, and, if possible, to hit the right Midst betwixt them. Let us take Care that our Language be not too cramp or affected, too florid or pompous, on the one Hand ; nor too coarse and flat on the other : Let us neither soar too high, nor creep too low ; but let us labour to deliver the Truths of the Gospel in grave, decent, serious, scriptural Language, and such as our People may at first Hearing understand.

5. Let us deliver the important Doctrines of Christianity to our Hearers, and inculcate the great Duties thereof upon them, with suitable Warmth and Seriousness. It is necessary indeed, in the first Place, that we explain the Nature of any Subject we are handling, as clearly as we can, that our People may understand it, and have right Apprehensions of it. We must inform the Mind, and convince the Judgment, before we address ourselves to the Affections : " For to raise the Passions, without " first setting the Judgment right, is (as † *one ve.* " *ry well says*) like putting Spurs to the Horse, " and giving him the Reins, that he may run " away with his Rider." But, on the other Hand, it will signify very little to inform the Understanding, and set the Head right, if we do not also warm and engage the Heart ; for tho' the Affections should

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not have the supreme Direction, yet they must be the immediate Springs of human Action. A Man will never be persuaded to seek with any Diligence what he does not affect, nor shun with any Care what he does not abhor: And therefore, let it be our Endeavour, first to set Truth in as clear a Light as we can; and then, if possible, to make our Audience feel the Force of it.

Is it not strange and surprizing, my Brethren, to hear a Christian-preacher speaking of the great Truths and Duties of our holy Religion, as if the Words were freezing between his Lips? Can there be any Thing more unnatural and indecent? (to say no worse of it.) Is there any Thing in Christianity but what is great and weighty, serious and affecting? Are not all the Doctrines and Precepts, Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, fitted in their own Nature, to raise our Attention, to move our Affections, and to influence our Hearts and Lives? Must it not then be very unbecoming for a Preacher of the Gospel, when he is discoursing, for Instance, of *the Love of God*, or *the Sufferings of Christ*, of *the Evil of Sin*, or *the Beauty of Holiness*, of *Death* or *Judgment*, of *Heaven* or *Hell*; when he is discoursing, I say, on such great and important Subjects as these, to talk of them with as much Coldness and Indifference, as if he was telling an idle Story, or relating one of the common Occurrences of Life? Should we not, my Brethren, endeavour, as much as possible, to awaken the Consciences of our Hearers, to touch their Hearts, to work upon their Affections, and to raise in them suitable Sentiments of Piety and Devotion? But can we expect to move
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otherst, if we are are not affected ourselves? To warm others, when we ourselves are cold? To make others feel, what we ourselves have no Sense of? Let us then labour, in the *first* Place, to get our own Hearts deeply affected with the awful Truths and Doctrines of Religion we are to preach to others; and then to convince our Hearers that we are so, by discoursing of them with a becoming Gravity and Authority, Warmth and Seriousness.

6. Let us be diligent and painful in our ministerial Calling. Let us not carelessly or wilfully neglect any Part of our sacred Work; but let us *take Heed to the Ministry we have received of the Lord, that we may fulfil it*, as the Apostle exhorts *Archippus*, Colos. iv. 17. Let not one Duty interfere with, or juggle out another; but let us endeavour to perform every Part of our Work in its proper Season, and with due Care and Application of Mind. Idleness and Sloth are very unbecoming Ministers of the Gospel; for they are called *Labourers, Builders, Overseers, Shepherds, Stewards, Rulers and Watchmen*; all which Designations import great Labour and Diligence. You see with what Vehemence and Solemnity the Apostle presses this upon *Timothy*, and in him upon all Gospel-ministers to the End of the World, 2 *Tim.* iv. 1. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead, at his appearing and his Kingdom, Preach the Word, be instant in Season and out of Season, reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all Long-suffering and Doctrine.* And he prescribes nothing to us but what

† — *Si vis me flere, dolendum est*
Primum ipsi tibi—HOR.

what he practis'd himself ; for he was unweariedly diligent in his Master's Work ; he was willing to *spend and be spent* for the Good of Souls. He tells the *Ephesian* Presbyters, *Acts* xx. 18, 20. that they *knew how* he had laboured among them at all Seasons, and had taught them publickly, and from House to House ; testifying both to the *Jews*, and also to the *Greeks*, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*. And, above all, the Example of our blessed Lord and Saviour, should have a powerful Influence upon us this Way ; he went about continually doing Good, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom : And we find, that sometimes, after he had been busily employed in publick Work throughout the Day, he retired to some solitary Place, and spent the Night in Prayer ; so that *the Zeal of God's House did eat him up* ; it wearied his Body, wasted his Spirits, and exhausted his Strength ; and he reckoned it his Meat and Drink to do the Will of him that sent him, and finish his Work.

Let us endeavour, my Brethren, to imitate this noble Pattern. Let us ply our Work with the greatest Vigour and Activity, and give ourselves wholly to it ; and for this End let us abstract ourselves from all secular Business, as much as possible ; and beware of involving ourselves in the Affairs of this World. Ministers are called *Soldiers* ; and the Apostle tells us, *2 Tim.* ii. 4. *That no Man that warreth entangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a Soldier.* Sure I am, if we consider seriously how difficult, extensive, and important our ministerial Work is, and how weak and insufficient the best of us are
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for it, we will neither find Heart nor Leisure for other Business.

7. Let us see to it, that we be honest and faithful in the Management of our Work. As the fulfilling of our Ministry is a Service required of us, so it is a Trust committed unto us; let us then be faithful to our great Master, faithful to our own Consciences, and faithful to the Souls of those who are committed to our Charge. We are set as Overseers and Watchmen over the House of God; and we are told what the Lord requires and expects of us in that Station, *Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8, 9. Son of Man, I have set thee a Watchman over the House of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the Word at my Mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the Wicked, O wicked Man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the Wicked from his Way, that wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thine Hand, &c.* Let us then, my Brethren, tell our People their Duty plainly and honestly; and let us faithfully reprove them for their Sin, and warn them of their Danger, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, that we may exoner ourselves, and deliver our own Souls.

8. When we act in a judicative Capacity, and meet together for managing the *publick Affairs* of the Church, let us be careful to behave ourselves suitably to our sacred Character. Let us endeavour to be animated with a sincere and hearty Zeal for the Honour of our great Master, the Interest of Religion, and the Edification of our Fellow-christians. Let us shew a warm and affectionate Concern for the Purity of the Doctrine of Christ, the Plain-

Plainness and Spirituality of his Worship, the Authority of his Laws and Government, and the Peace and Welfare of his Church. And let us express a holy Displeasure and Indignation against Error and Heresy, Vice and Prophaneness, Faction and Disorder, and every Thing that's contrary to *sound Doctrine, and the Power of Godliness*. The Apostle tells us, *Gal. iv. 18. that it is good to be zealously affected in a good Thing*; and surely, my Brethren, Truth and Holiness, and Peace and Order are good Things; yea, of all others, the best and most valuable Things. We are called to *strive together for the Faith of the Gospel*, *Philip. i. 27.* and to *contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered unto the Saints*, *Jude, ver. 3.* And as Ministers we are peculiarly obliged to this, by Virtue of our Office; for we *are set up for the Defence and Confirmation of the Gospel*, *Philip. i. 17.*

But, in the mean Time, my Brethren, let us take Care that our Zeal be duly tempered with Christian Prudence and Moderation, with Meekness, Humility and Charity. Let us beware of mixing the Wildfire of our own Passions with this holy and heavenly Fire of Zeal, and much more of substituting the one in Place of the other: For, as the Apostle tells us, *James i. 20. The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*; yea, it ordinarily produces the quite contrary Effects, as the same Apostle observes, *Chap. iii. 16. Where bitter envying (or, as it may be rendred, bitter Zeal) and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work.* Let us then endeavour, my Brethren, to manage all our Debates and Reasonings with that Gravity, and Calmness of Temper, that becomes our Character,
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as Ministers of the Gospel, abstaining from all harsh and injurious Reflections upon those who may differ from us; all bitter and satyrical Repartees; all strained Constructions upon their Words; and every Thing that has a Tendency to raise their Passions, and ruffle their Minds. We may make our Arguments as hard and strong as we please; but let us always take Care to use soft and gentle Words.

And let us, in all our Consultations and Decisions, show a sacred Regard to Candor, Equity and Justice. It is an excellent Saying of one of the Antients to this Purpose †, "It becomes all Men, in Matters of Debate and Judgment, to divest themselves of Love, Hatred, Compassion, Resentment, and the like Passions: For the Mind can hardly discern the Truth, when these Affections stand in the Way." Let us then my Brethren, endeavour, as much as possible, to lay aside all our Prejudices and Passions, and every Thing that may darken our Minds, and clap a Bias upon our Judgments. Let us not, in Matters of Judgment, suffer ourselves to be sway'd by a *Respect of Persons*, by Love and Friendship on the one Hand, or Hatred and Dislike on the other, or any Thing else that is foreign to the Merits of the Cause; for thus we shall become guilty of gross Partiality and Injustice. We may apply to this Purpose that excellent Law which Moses prescribes to the Judges of *Israel*, Lev. xix. 15. *Thou shalt do no Unrighteousness in Judgment; thou shalt not respect the Person of the Poor, nor honour*

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† *Omnes homines, qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, amicitia, ira, atque misericordia vacuos esse decet. Haud facile animus verum providet, ubi illa officiant.*

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the Person of the Mighty; but in Righteousness shalt thou judge thy Neighbour. And it is a very solemn Charge which the Apostle gives to Timothy, 1 Epist. v. 21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elect Angels, that thou observe these Things, without preferring one before another; doing nothing by Partiality.

9. Let us endeavour, in the whole of our Conversation, to behave ourselves suitably to our Christian and ministerial Calling. Ministers are obliged by their sacred Character to be *Ensamples unto the Flock*, 1 Pet. v. 3. And the Apostle exhorts *Timothy*, and in him all Ministers, to be an *Example of the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity*, 1 Tim. iv. 12. and to follow after *Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness*. Chap. vi. 11. It is not enough, my Brethren, that we lay not a *Stumbling-block* before our People, by our evil Works, but we must in all Things shew ourselves *Paterns of good Works*, Tit. ii. 7. We must be careful to enforce all the Exhortations, Warnings, and Advices we give them, by our own Practice and Example: And not only point out the right Way to them, but lead them in it, and walk before them as *He-goats before the Flock*. And thus we shall be in Case to say to them, as the Apostle does to the *Corinthians*, *Be ye Followers of me even as I also am of Christ*; and as *Gideon* did to his Soldiers, *Look on me and do likewise*. O! happy is that Minister who can, with a humble Confidence, appeal both to God and Men upon this Head, and say with the Apostle, ver. 10. of this Chapter where my Text lies, *Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly, and unblameably we be-*
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hav'd ourselves among you that believe. It is certain, my Brethren, that a holy Life and Conversation will have a stronger Influence upon our People, to engage them to comply with our Instructions and Exhortations, than any other Arguments we can possibly use with them: Whereas, on the contrary, if our *Practice* visibly contradict our *Preaching*, we do but *pull down* with one Hand, what we *built up* with the other. We take the most effectual Method to frustrate the Ends of our Ministry, and render all our Labours unsuccessful. And we lay ourselves justly open to that severe Expostulation of the Apostle, *Rom. ii. 21. Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a Man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a Man should not commit Adultery, dost thou commit Adultery? Thou that makest thy Boast of the Law, thro' breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God?*

10. Let us, in the Whole of our ministerial Work, depend upon God himself by *Faith* and *Prayer*, for his Blessing to accompany all our Labours, and make them successful. The Apostle tells us, *2 Cor. iii. 5. That we are not of ourselves sufficient to think any Thing as of ourselves; but our Sufficiency is of God.* And sure I am, we must be very great Strangers to ourselves, and very much unacquainted with the Difficulty and Importance of our Work, if we are not thoroughly convinced of the Truth of this. Well then, my Brethren, since all our *Sufficiency is of God*, let all our Dependence be upon him; since all our *Springs are in him*, and all our Help must come from him, let us constantly look up to him, that he may *make his Grace suf-*

scient for us, and perfect his Strength in our Weakness. He is the God of Ordinances, and the Master of Assemblies; and the Virtue and Efficacy of all Gospel-ordinances depends intirely upon his Blessing, and the Concurrence of his Holy Spirit with them: For tho' *Paul* should plant, and *Appollos* water, yet unless God himself give the Increase, no Increase will follow. The precious Treasure of the Gospel is put into poor weak earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may appear to be of God, and not of Man.

And therefore, after all the Pains we can take, let us have Recourse to the Throne of Grace, and wrestle earnestly with God for his Blessing to attend all our Ministrations. Let us pray, that he would, out of his rich Treasures, minister both Seed to the Sower, and Bread to the Eater. That he would touch our Lips with a Live-coal from his holy Altar, that we may speak as becomes the Oracles of God. That he would give us Utterance, that we may open our Mouths boldly, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel of Christ. That he would make the Weapons of our Warfare mighty (thro' Power of his Grace) for the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down of all Imaginations, and bringing every high Thought in Captivity to the Obedience of Christ. And, in short, that he would enable us so to manage every Part of our Work, as the Souls of our People may be edified, and we may obtain the Divine Acceptance and Approbation.

I now proceed to the

Third and last Thing proposed, viz. To open the Force of the Arguments here offered to us, and shew you what Influence they ought to have upon

us, to engage us to make it our chief Aim and Endeavour, *to please God rather than Men.*

The first Argument the *Apostle* suggests to us, is, that *we are allowed, or approved of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel.* Now this implies, 1. That we are the Servants of God, in a peculiar Sense, and he is our great Lord and Master. 2. That he has conferred a very special Honour and Privilege upon us, in *putting us into the Ministry.* 3. That he has committed a very important Trust to us. And 4. That as we are his Servants, and imployed in his Work, we have Reason to expect his Countenance and Protection. Now, all these Considerations ought to have a mighty Influence upon us, to engage us to *please God rather than Men.*

1. Consider, my Brethren, that you are in a peculiar Sense the Servants of God, and he is your great Lord and Master. He has approved you, or judged you fit to be imployed as his Servants, in the Work of the Gospel. What was said of *Paul* and his Fellow-labourers at *Philippi*, Acts xvi. 17. may (at least in a lower Sense) be applied to all the Ministers of the Gospel. *These are the Servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the Way of Salvation.* Now, my Brethren, if you are not *the Servants of Men*, but *the Servants of the most high God*; does it not follow evidently, that you are bound to *please God rather than Men?* that you ought to please your great Lord and Master, rather than gratify the Humours of your Fellow-servants?

Consider, I pray you, what a vain Thing it is, to endeavour to *please Men*; and how hard and difficult a Task you undertake, when you attempt it. For there is such a prodigious Variety of Tem-
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pers, Opinions, and Inclinations amongst the Multitude, that when you *please some*, you must of Necessity *displease others*. And the Humours of particular Persons are so fickle and inconstant, that what pleases them at one Time, may probably *disgust them* at another. You may have their Favour and Esteem To-day, and may lose it again To-morrow. A very small Circumstance may make them dislike and contemn you, as much as ever they valued you.

But tho' you were sure of gaining the Esteem and Applause of Men, and of keeping it too; yet what would it avail you? What Advantage can you expect to reap from it? What an empty and airy Enjoyment is it? And how little Satisfaction can it give to the Mind? Especially if you compare it with the Favour and Approbation of your great Lord and Master, *whose loving Kindness is better than Life*. How trifling and inconsiderable will the Applauses and Commendations of all Mankind appear, if you view them in this Light? And how infinitely more does it concern you, to *approve your selves unto him*, upon whose Acceptance and Approbation your eternal Happiness depends?

But besides, if you make it your chief Care to *please Men*, and to procure their Esteem; if you *love and seek the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God*, 'tis plain, you cannot be accounted his faithful Servants; you justly forfeit your Claim to that honourable Character. For (says the Apostle, Gal. i. 10) *if I yet pleased Men, I should not be the Servant of Christ*. If, for the Sake of *pleasing Men*, or for Fear of their Displeasure, you deny Christ, your Lord and Master, and disown his Truths or Interests, he will solemnly disown you at last

last for his Servants, *Matth. x. 33. Whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*

2. Consider that God has conferred a very special Honour and Privilege upon you, in vesting you with the sacred Office; and therefore you are obliged, *in Gratitude*, to serve him diligently and faithfully in it, and to make it your great Business to *please him rather than Men*. You see how the *Apostle* expresses the deep Sense he had of this, *1 Tim. i. 12. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry. And Eph. iii. 8. Unto me, who am less than the least of all Saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ. O! my Brethren, has God so remarkably distinguished you from the rest of your Fellow-Christians? Has he advanced you to such an eminent Station in his Church? Has he furnished you, in some Measure, with suitable Gifts and Qualifications for it? Has he counted you faithful to put you into the Ministry? Has he appointed you to be Stewards of the Mysteries of God, to be Overseers of the Flock of Christ, to be Embassadors in his Name and Stead, to be Workers together with him? Has he exalted you to such a high Dignity, and favoured you with such a noble Privilege? And does not all this lay you under the strongest Obligations, to make it your chief Business to *please and honour and glorify him*? Sure I am, if you have any true Love to God and to your blessed Redeemer; if you have any Sense of Ingenuity or Gratitude, you cannot but be convinced, that you are bound by the strictest Ties, to consecrate yourselves intirely to his*

Pleasure

Pleasure and Service, and to value his Approbation of you, infinitely more than the Esteem or Applause of Men.

3. Consider that he has committed a very important Trust unto you, and therefore you must study above all Things to please him, and find Acceptance in his Sight, otherwise you cannot be faithful to your Trust. He has approved you, as fit and proper Persons, *to be put in Trust with the Gospel*. He has intrusted you with the Dispensation of the *Word*, the Administration of the *Sacraments*, the Exercise of *Discipline* and *Government*, and all the *Ordinances* of his own Appointment. The *Gospel* of *Jesus Christ*, which he has committed to your Trust, is a very rich and *precious Treasure*; and you must deliver it to your People, pure and uncorrupted, as you have received it of the Lord. You are called to be *the Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. Now, (says the *Apostle*) *it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful*, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. Faithfulness is the main and principal Qualification that is required of them; and therefore, my Brethren, as *Stewards* of God's Household, you must faithfully dispense *the Bread of Life* to all the *Children* and *Servants* of the Family, giving to every one of *them*, *their Portion of Meat in due Season*. You must not offer them *a Stone* instead of *Bread*; you must not give them *a Serpent* in place of *a Fish*; you must not administer *Poison* to them, (tho' it may be sweet and pleasing to their Taste) instead of sound and wholesome Food.

O! Consider I pray you, my Brethren, that the Glory of God, the Honour of your Redeemer, the Interest of Religion, the Credit and Success of your Ministry,

24. None of these Things move me ; neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so as I may finish my Course with Joy, and fulfil the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.

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Master,

Master, and couragious for the Cause of Truth and Religion; for Christ has promised you his gracious Presence, Countenance, Assistance, and Protection in the faithful Discharge of the Work he has called you to. *Lo (says he) I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.* Math. xxviii. 20. He will be with you, to own and countenance you in your Work; to assist and direct you in the Management of it; to support you under the Hardships and Difficulties you meet with; to comfort you under your Discouragements; to concur with your Labours, and crown them with Success.

What shall we then say to these Things, my Brethren? If God be for us, who can be against us? If he be on our Side, we need not be afraid, tho' all the Devils in Hell, and wicked Men upon Earth should combine against us; for stronger is he that is on our Side, than all they that can possibly rise up against us.

The other Motive which the *Apostle* proposes to us is, that *God trieth our Hearts.* Now this implies, that he strictly observes all our Actions, that he knows the secret Springs and Designs of them, and that he will call us at last to a strict and impartial Account of them.

1. Consider that God narrowly observes all your Actions, and surveys the whole of your Conduct and Management, and therefore it concerns you much to *approve yourselves unto him.* You may easily conceal yourselves, and a great many of your Actions from the View of Men, they have not Access to observe your Behaviour in your secret Retirements, and so they may be mistaken in passing a Judgment concerning you. *But all Things are naked and open*

in the Eyes of him with whom you have to do. You cannot possibly hide yourselves from him in secret Places. He knows your lying down and rising up, and compasseth all your Paths; and therefore, my Brethren, see that you set the Lord always before you. Remember that you are constantly under the View of his all-seeing Eye. And study above all Things to approve yourselves unto him, and to find Favour in his Sight.

2. Consider that he not only observes your outward Behaviour, but is acquainted with the inward Temper and Disposition of your Hearts, and knows the secret Springs and Motives of all your Actions, and the Ends to which they are directed. To what Purpose, my Brethren, should you be so earnestly desirous of gaining the Esteem and Applause of Men, since *they see but your outward Appearance*, and are so liable to be imposed upon by it? They know not the inward Springs and Principles of your Actions, the Motives by which you are swayed, nor the Ends and Designs which you propose to yourselves; and therefore they may be very easily deceived in framing a Judgment of you, and may err on the favourable, as well as the severe Side. But O! remember, my Brethren, you have to do with a God who *searcheth the Hearts and trieth the Reins of the Children of Men*, who knows the secret Principles, Motives, and Ends of all your Actions, and cannot possibly be mistaken in passing a Judgment concerning them; and therefore it ought to be your great Concern to act from *right Motives*, and for *right Ends*, in every Thing you do, and particularly to make it your main Scope and Endeavour, in the whole of your ministerial Work, to *please and glorify God*, since

otherwise you cannot expect to obtain his Approbation.

3. Consider that he will at last call you to a strict and impartial Account, for the whole of your Conduct. *God's searching the Hearts of Men*, is frequently mentioned in Scripture, with a View to his judging and rewarding them. Thus *Jer. xvii. 10. I the Lord search the Heart, I try the Reins; even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings,* *Rev. ii. 23. I am he which searcheth the Reins and Hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your Works.* O! my Brethren, how should the Prospect of that great and awful Day of Accounts engage you to Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart, to Faithfulness and Diligence in your Work, and to make it your great Business *to please God rather than Men?* You see it had this Influence upon the *Apostles and primitive Christians*, *2 Cor. v. 9, 10. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ.* How little does it import you, my Brethren, what Judgment your Fellow-Creatures may pass concerning you, whether they approve or condemn you? Their Judgment can only affect your temporal Concerns, and its Influence and Effects will be but of a very short Duration. But O! my Brethren, of what infinite Consequence is it to you to stand clear in the Judgment of your great Lord, and to be accepted and approved by him, upon whose Sentence your eternal Happiness or Misery depends? You see with what a Greatness of Soul the *Apostle* expresses himself upon this Head, *1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. With me it is a very small*

small Thing to be judged of you, or of Man's Judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord.

You are appointed *Stewards of God's Household*, and ere long you must give an *Account of your Stewardship* to your great Lord and Master. You are called to be *Overseers and Shepherds of the Flock of Christ*; and if, upon Trial, you shall be found to have been negligent or unfaithful, how severely will the great Judge charge it home upon you, as he did upon the *Shepherds of Israel* of old, *Ezek. xxxiv. 2.* and *Jer. xxiii. 2.* *The Diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost. But ye have scattered my Flock, and driven them away; and have not visited them. Behold I will visit upon you the Evil of your Doings.* O! how dreadful must your Condemnation, how intolerable must your Punishment be!

How will your own Consciences gall and sting you, and increase the Horror and Anguish of your Woe? How bitterly will they challenge and upbraid you, because ye have known the Right, and yet have done the Wrong? You have pointed out the Way of Righteousness to others, but have not walked in it your selves; you have directed others how to behave, so as to *please God*, but you have not been careful to *please him* your selves.

And those miserable Wretches, who have perished thro' your Negligence or Unfaithfulness, how severely will they accuse and condemn you? How will they be apt to reproach you in such Terms as these? "Base and perfidious Men! it is you who have brought

“ brought all this upon us! it is you who have
 “ plunged us into irrecoverable Misery! you have
 “ betrayed your own Trust, and ruined our pre-
 “ cious Souls! if you had done your Duty honestly
 “ and carefully; if you had faithfully reprov’d us
 “ for our Sins, and warn’d us of our Danger; if
 “ you had not been more careful to please our Hu-
 “ mours, than to edify our Souls; if you had not
 “ basely conniv’d at our Follies, and flattered us in
 “ our Vices, we might have escap’d this dreadful
 “ Place of Torments! But now, alas! we are
 “ lost and undone for ever! and a great Part of the
 “ Blame lyes at your Door.” O my Brethren!
 Can you think of all this, without the utmost
 Dread and Consternation of Mind? When you
consider it, are you not afraid? And doth not
Trembling take hold of your Flesh? Who can en-
 dure such cutting Reproaches and Accusations as
 these? Who *can bear the Wounds* of a guilty Con-
 science? And *who knows the Power of God’s*
Wrath? *Who shall be able to stand before him, if*
once he is angry? *It is a fearful Thing to fall into*
the Hands of a living God!

But on the other hand, my Brethren, if you be
 sincere and honest-hearted; if you be diligent and
 faithful in the Discharge of your Work; and if you
 make it your great Scope and Business, to *please*
God rather than Men, you shall at last obtain the
 Approbation of your great Lord and Master, which
 is infinitely more to be valued and desired than the
 Esteem and Applause of Men. When you *stand be-*
fore the awful Tribunal of Christ, you shall hold up
 your Faces with Joy and Confidence, and shall hear
 that comfortable Sentence pass in your Favour by the
 great

great Judge of the World: *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, thou hast been faithful in a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* He will bestow upon you a glorious *Recompence of Reward*, infinitely surpassing the Merit of your best Services, and far exceeding your largest Wishes and Hopes. For the *Apostle* assures you, 1 Pet. v. 4. that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* And you are told, Dan. xii. 3. that *they that be wise, shall shine like the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* Where the Prophet seems to intimate, that faithful Pastors, who make it their great Care and Business to convert many Souls, and turn them to Righteousness, shall shine with a distinguished Blaze of Glory, above the ordinary Rate of other Saints; as far as the *Light of the Stars* excels the *Brightness of the Firmament*, wherein they sparkle like so many *Diamonds*. O! my Brethren, how should it animate and encourage you in your Work, to think, that every Sinner you reclaim from the Error of his Ways, every Soul you bring in to the Lord *Jesus Christ*, every Saint you edify and improve in true Holiness, shall be as so many bright *Gems* in your *heavenly Crown*; that they shall make an Addition to your Happiness, and an Increase of your glorious Reward.

Let me then beseech you, my Brethren, to *set the Lord always before you*; to act as in his View, and under his Observation; and to study, above all Things, to *approve yourselves unto him*. Gird up the Loins of your Mind; shake off your Indolence
and

and Sloth, and apply your selves with Vigour and Activity to your Work. And thus you are encouraged to hope for that Grace, which shall be brought unto you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

I shall now conclude this long Discourse with a few Advices to such of the Christian People as are here present.

1. You must not imagine, my Friends, that what I have said hitherto, belongs to Ministers alone, and that you have no Manner of Concern in it. For I can assure you, it is your Duty, as well as theirs, to make it your great Business to please and glorify God, and to endeavour to do so still more and more. Thus the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians, Chap. iv. 1. Furthermore we beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. You may, no Doubt, please your Neighbours and Fellow-Christians, so far as you can do it with a safe Conscience, and in a Consistency with the Duty you owe to God. But when you cannot please Men, but at the Hazard of displeasing God; when you cannot gain their Good-will and Esteem, otherwise than by forfeiting the Divine Favour, and incurring his Hatred and Indignation; sure I am, you need be at no Loss what Choice to make. For whether it be right in the Sight of God, to hearken unto Men, more than unto God, judge ye. Our Saviour tells you very peremptorily, Matth. x. 37. compared with Luke xiv. 26. He that loveth Father or Mother, Wife or Children, Brethren or Sisters more than me, is not worthy of me, and cannot be my Disciple. If
you

you love your nearest Friends, Relations or Acquaintances better than *Christ*; if you are more desirous to please them than *him*, to gain their Favour, and avoid their Displeasure, than *his*, you cannot be his *Disciples* or Servants; and he will not own you as such.

2. You must not take it in bad Part, when your Ministers deal honestly and faithfully with you; when they tell you freely of your Faults, reprove you for your Sins, and warn you of your Danger. You must not count them your *Enemies* because they tell you the *Truth*; for consider, I pray you, my Brethren, that they are bound to all this by Virtue of their Office; they are obliged to discharge their Duty faithfully; to make it their Business to *please God*, rather than you; and to be more afraid of his Anger than of yours: And therefore, you ought not only to hearken to their Instructions and Exhortations, but to submit likewise to the Admonitions, Warnings, and Reproofs they give you; when you have Reason to be satisfied, that they are just and well founded. To this Purpose the *Apostle* exhorts you, *Heb. xiii. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account; that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for you.* And besides, consider that Ministers are so far from being your *Enemies*, when they deal thus freely and faithfully with you, that they are your best Friends, and do you the best Service they are capable of: For though an Admonition may be somewhat grating and disagreeable to you, yet it is really for your Advantage; as a Portion of Physick contributes to the Health, though it

be nauseous and unpleasant to the Taste. It is an excellent Observation of the wise Man's, Prov. xxvii.

6. *Faithful are the Wounds of a Friend; but the Kisses of an Enemy are deceitful:* And therefore you should be so far from being disgusted at your Ministers, for dealing plainly and honestly with you; that you ought to love and value them so much the more for it. You should be ready to say with the Psalmist, Psal. cxli. 5. *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oil, which shall not break my Head.*

3. Let me exhort you to pity your Ministers, and pray for them. They have a hard and difficult Work to manage; they have many Frailties and Infirmities to struggle with; they have much Opposition to encounter; and are exposed to a Variety of Snares and Temptations. A Desire of *pleasing Men*, and of being esteemed and approved by them, frequently proves a strong Temptation; and, on the other Hand, *the Fear of Man* often *bringeth a Snare*, Prov. xxix. 25. So that it is not an easy Matter for them *to keep a Conscience void of Offence both towards God and Man*; to avoid giving any just Ground of Offence to Men, and yet, at the same Time, to discharge their Duty faithfully, and *approve themselves to their Lord and Master*: And therefore they have much Need of your Sympathy and Prayers. The Apostle frequently desires the Prayers of the Christians to whom he writes; and sure I am, the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel need the Prayers of their Fellow-Christians a great deal more. I shall only mention one Passage at present, 1 Thes. iii. 1, 2. *Finally, Brethren,*
pray

pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free Course, and be glorified. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked Men: For all Men have not Faith.

4. Be not too forward to censure and blame your Ministers for any Part of their Conduct; especially in Things of a doubtful and disputable Nature: For *they* may perhaps be in the right, and *you* in the wrong. They may possibly have examin'd the Matter more thoroughly than you have done, and so may be better able to judge aright concerning it: And besides you know not the Reasons and Motives of their Conduct, and the Ends they have had in their View; and so you are in great Hazard of being mistaken in the Judgment you form about it. They have done a Thing that is offensive to you, and contrary to your Sentiments and Inclinations. But what if that which displeases you, should, at the same Time, be pleasing and acceptable unto God? What if they have sincerely followed the Light of their own Consciences; and studied, in this Part of their Conduct, as well as others, to approve themselves unto their great Lord? And if this be the Case, my Friends, must you not own, that you have been rash and presumptuous in passing a Judgment to their Disadvantage? Yea, that you have been uncharitable and injurious to them, in censuring and condemning them for that, for which they deserve to be commended: Besides, that you have boldly encroached upon the Prerogative of God, and presumed to take his Work out of his Hands: For I may apply to this Purpose what the *Apostle* says, *Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest another's Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth.*

I might suggest several other Advices to you; but because I have wearied your Patience too much already, I conclude with that excellent Prayer of the Apostle's, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ: To whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.



